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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: UNCONTRITE SEZER TELLS AMBASSADOR IRAQ
INCIDENT WAS "UNACCEPTABLE."

(U) Classified by Ambassador W.R. Pearson. Reason:1.5(b)(d)

11. (C) Ambassador paid a farewell visit July 14 on President Sezer, who while maintaining his usually low-key and disinterested demeanor reiterated several times his public charge that the July 4 arrest (and subsequent release) of Turkish Special Forces (TSF) troops in Iraq was "unacceptable" under any circumstances. Sezer shook his head "no" vigorously on several different occasions, while Ambassador was relating that U.S. forces had strong reasons for their actions. Sezer noted the mil/mil commission was continuing its work; he expressed hope that its conclusions would provide a clearer understanding and basis for U.S.-Turkey relations in the future.

12. (C) Ambassador replied that there are two distinct issues involved in the matter: 1) how TSF were treated; and 2) the more fundamental issue, which is the fact that the U.S. forces had solid reasons to be concerned about violent activities planned by the TSF inimical to stability in Iraq. It is thus the purpose of the joint Fact-Finding Team to examine both issues. The USG understands the emotions on the Turkish side; it is important, however, to lower the temperature of deliberations and to ensure the development of coordination procedures that will prevent such things from happening again. Ambassador noted that relations between the U.S. and Turkish militaries -- which for fifty years had been a pillar of the wider U.S.-Turkey relationship -- are strained; both sides should do the utmost to improve the atmosphere. Gens. Abizaid and Jones are coming to Turkey July 18, F.M. Gul is planning a visit to the U.S. thereafter; such visits are very important to helping put the bilateral relationship back on track. Ambassador reiterated that, frankly, Turkey needed to understand that the U.S. units involved had reason to act, even if the way the action unfolded on the ground raised questions in Turkey about its propriety. Ambassador elaborated that the USG is working to demonstrate that Turkey and the U.S. share the same broad perspective on Iraq, which given turkey's geographical advantages would go a long way to encouraging and promoting Turkish business and other interests.

13. (C) Sezer reiterated that the incident was unacceptable, then volunteered the following as context: U.S.-Turkey relations were fine, he said, until the March 1 failure in Parliament of the Government's resolution that would have allowed U.S. troop deployments to and through Turkey. "The United States said that its main reasons for going to war in Iraq were the WMD threat and the need to democratize the country. I don't know if you have any WMD data yet, but as for democratization: the Turkish constitution gives the Parliament the authority to make such decisions. So, while the U.S. campaigns for democracy in Iraq you should not complain about democracy in another country." The AK Government may have wanted the resolution to pass, Sezer said, but the decision was up to the legislature.

COMMENT

14. (C) Sezer is politically tone deaf. He adhered to the Turkish hard-liners' view regarding the July 4 incident; he also showed a lack of interest in seeking ground that would allow both Turkey and the U.S. to put the issue in context and bilateral relations back on track.
PEARSON